



February 7, 2023 - Committee on Children

**SB 929, AN ACT EXPANDING SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE FREE SCHOOL MEALS TO ALL STUDENTS**

Senator Maher, Representative Linehan, and members of the Committee on Children. My name is Ali Ghiorse and I am from Greenwich, Connecticut. Today, I am writing to **ask for your support for SB 929, An Act Expanding School Meal Programs to Provide Free School Meals to All Students**. Greenwich is a predominantly wealthy community, however, 22% of our residents fall into the ALICE category.

Providing free school meals to all students is a pathway towards food equity, and supports a local food economy. No child should go through their day hungry. No child should feel ashamed because their family struggles to afford food. Additionally, locally produced, fresh and nutritious food should be accessible to everyone, especially children.

There is encouraging data indicating the positive aspects of no cost school meals. Kids are better learners, there is less absenteeism, there is no embarrassment due to not being able to afford paying for lunch, kids are healthier and ready to learn. What strikes me the most, is there is less bullying. The space where children gather to eat, such as the school cafeteria, should in no way be a place where children feel fear. No cost school meals can help foster an environment where children learn to share a meal with each other, and enjoy the pleasure of eating. Please support this important bill.

Thank you, very much, for your time and service.

Ali Ghiorse, Founder, The Foodshed Network  
Greenwich, CT